

ClubSpot

Glasgow Ski Touring Club



By Avril Lamont



Across the Great Moss with Braeriach, Angel's Peak & Cairn Toul in background

Photo: Martin Robinson

Glasgow Ski Touring Club started as Glasgow Nordic Ski Club in April 1984. In the early days the emphasis was on track skiing and racing. However in the late 1980s there was an increasing interest in mountain touring, and at that point the club affiliated to the Mountaineering Council of Scotland. The name was changed in 2005 as members felt that the term "nordic skiing" was not well understood and the new name gave a better indication to prospective members of what the club was about.

Nordic skiing refers to skiing on "free heel" equipment, and encompasses the use of lightweight skis for forest tracks and racing, mountain touring on metal edged skis, and telemarking on downhill pistes. Track skiing is also referred to as "cross country skiing" and this term is also sometimes applied to free heel touring. Ski touring also

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encompasses the use of alpine ski mountaineering gear. In practice all current members of GSTC use free heel skis, but the club could also accommodate alpine tourers. While mountain touring remains the principal "on snow" activity of the club, some members also enjoy track skiing when the opportunity arises, and some also ski on piste.

In the early 1990s a pattern of club activity became established which has endured with minor changes to the present. During the ski season, from December to early May, there were two or three weekend ski meets each month. For the remainder of the year there was usually one weekend meet per month, normally centred on hill walking, although occasionally on alternative activities such as cycling or canoeing.

The main change in the intervening period is that with decreased snowfall the ski season is now defined as January to April, and even within this period the expectation is that weekends are as likely to be spent walking as skiing.

Day meets also take place, but whereas these used to be



Photo: Dave Nichol

programmed, skiing days are now organised on an informal and ad hoc basis when the snow arrives. This is so much easier now that most people have email. For many years a high level camp and ski meet was programmed for late May, and sometimes ad hoc skiing took place into June, but it has been some time since this was feasible.

The Cairngorms are the usual venue for ski weekends, and the club makes use of the various huts available in this area, as well as independent

and SYHA hostels. Geographical coverage was more widespread in the 1990s, when the chances of finding snow elsewhere were better.

For many years an annual trip to Loch Ossian Youth Hostel was a highlight of the season. For day meets the Ben Lawers/Beinn Heasgarnich area or the Drumochter hills are the usual choice, but with the unpredictable snowfall in recent years there has been some ad hoc skiing closer to the club's Glasgow base.

During the summer months the club takes advantage of holiday weekends to venture further afield for hill walking trips, with the North West and the islands being favourites. These trips may be based in club huts, hostels or camping. Some of the most memorable trips have included Knoydart, Rum, Eigg, Skye, Applecross and Kintail.

For variety, there have also been meets in the Lake District and the Borders. Club meets have helped many members increase their Munro tallies and members have helped celebrate at least three last Munros and one last Corbett (one of the Munros having been a ski ascent).

From time to time other day and evening activities are arranged, including day hill walks, orienteering, trips to a dry ski slope and social events. There is a regular newsletter, produced roughly monthly, which keeps members in touch with recent and planned events.

Throughout the club's existence members have regularly travelled abroad, with Norway being the most popular destination. In recent years the Norway trip has been the best opportunity for guaranteed snow and several consecutive days' skiing.

Most members come from a hill walking background. Some were already experienced downhill skiers before converting to free heel. Most have had to learn the skills for mountain touring through a combination of instruction (which the club organises when required) and experience out on the hills.

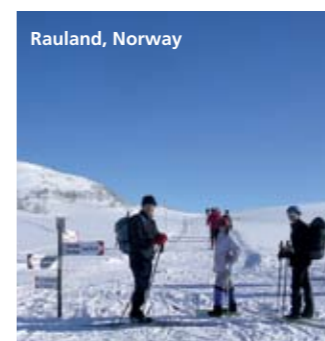
On both skiing and walking weekends, routes and parties are made up on an informal basis, with no system of leaders, but the club always ensures that new and/or inexperienced members are included in a suitable group.

Membership numbers have declined since the heyday of nordic ski touring and currently stand at around 50. This includes a number of juniors who are sons and



Coming off Braeriach

Photo: Martin Robinson



Rauland, Norway

Photo: Avril Lamont



In the Lecht

Photo: Dave Nichol



On a summer meet on the pier at Knoydart

Photo: Avril Lamont



Summer meet at the summit of An Teallach

Photo: Avril Lamont

daughters of adult members. However the club is keen to attract new people, whether they are experienced skiers, walkers keen to give ski touring a try, or simply people who enjoy being out on the hills in good company. It is quite acceptable to join the club and come on summer meets only.

While Glasgow remains the base, a substantial proportion of the membership now lives elsewhere, and because club activity centres mainly on weekend meets, people from anywhere in Scotland can participate easily.

Prospective members are welcome to come along to meets before committing to joining.

The club has a website at www.spanglefish.com/glasgowskitouringclub. This provides further information and contact details for anyone wishing to find out more or to come along and join in.